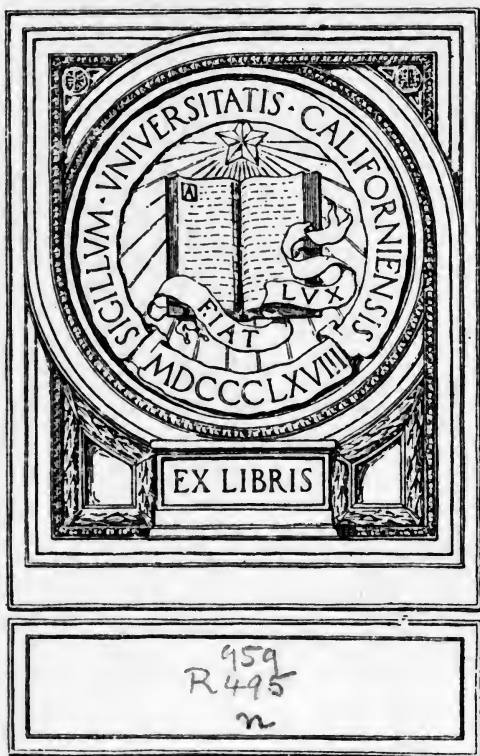
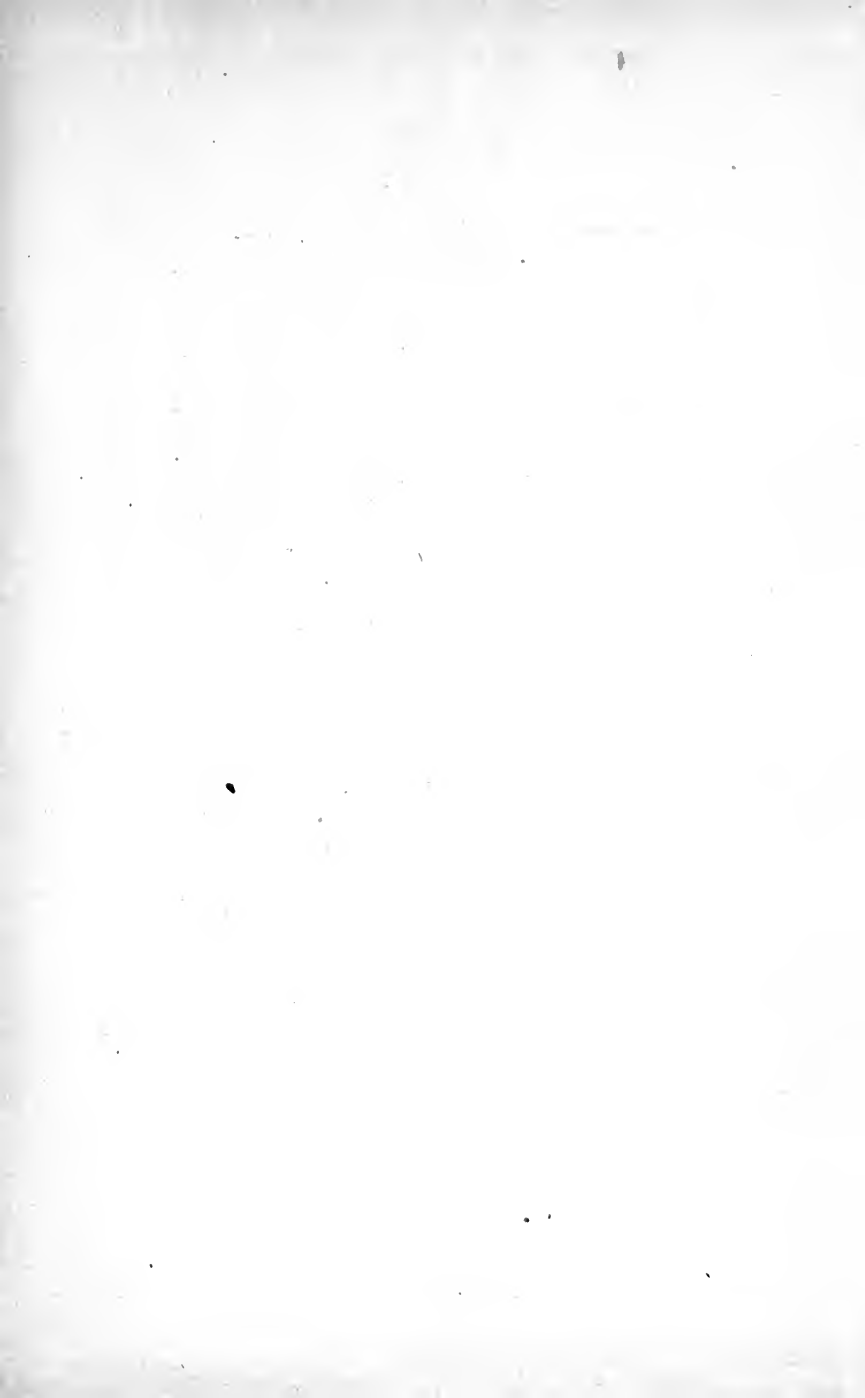
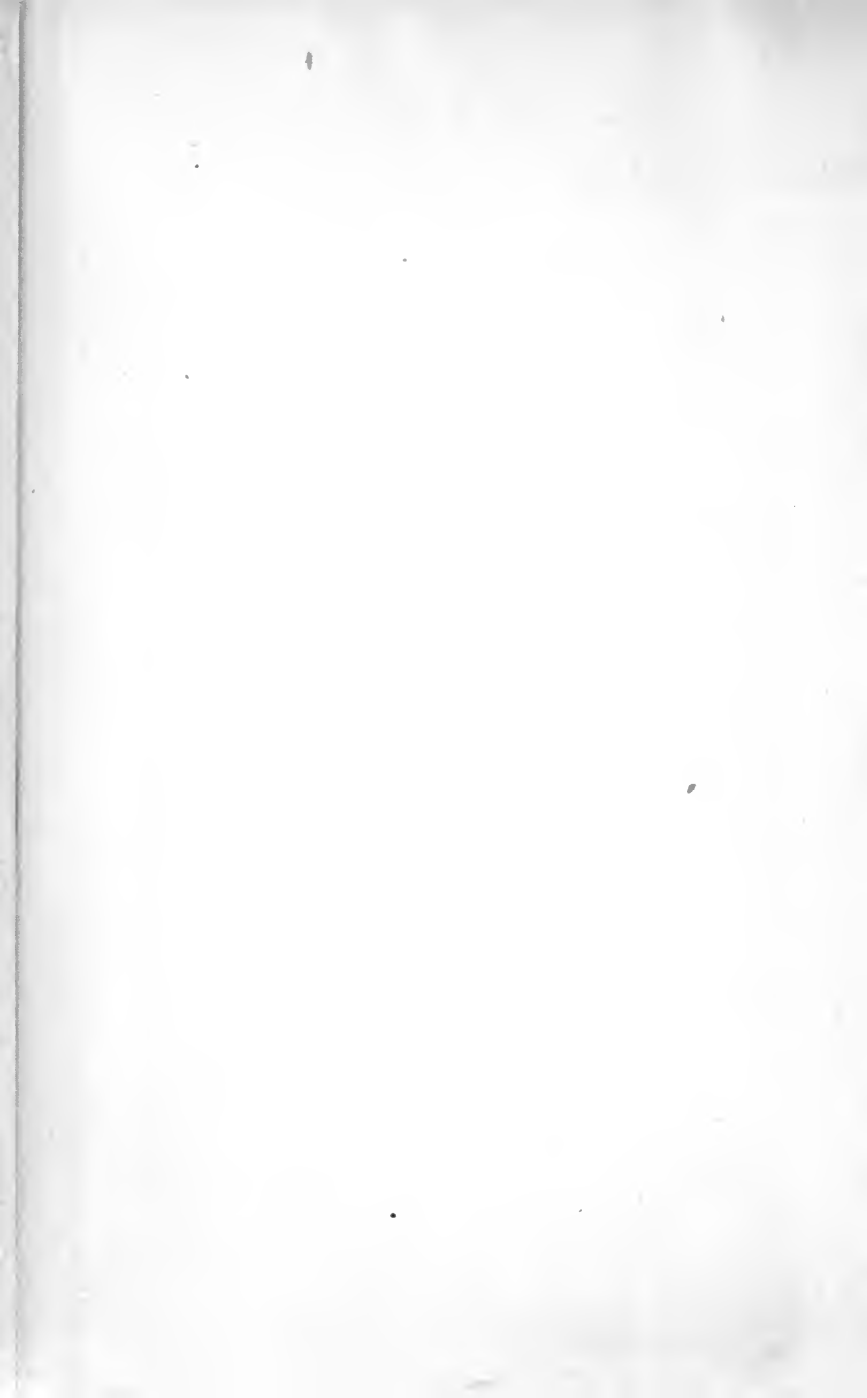


NIRI'ANA
DAYS
CALF YOUNG RICE







NIRVANA DAYS

NIRVANA DAYS

BY

CALE YOUNG RICE

AUTHOR OF

CHARLES DI TOCCA, A NIGHT IN AVIGNON,
YOLANDA OF CYPRUS, DAVID, ETC.



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TO
JAMES LANE ALLEN
WITH FRIENDSHIP AND
FAITHFUL ESTEEM

FOREWORD

A few of the poems of this volume are retained from two of the author's earlier volumes which are now out of print. The rest are new.

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NIRVANA DAYS



INVOCATION

(From a High Cliff)

Sweep unrest
Out of my blood,
Winds of the sea! Sweep the fog
Out of my brain
For I am one
Who has told Life he will be free.
Who will not doubt of work that's done,
Who will not fear the work to do.
Who will hold peaks Promethean
Better than all Jove's honey-dew.
Who when the Vulture tears his breast
Will smile into the Terror's Eyes.
Who for the World has this Bequest—
Hope, that eternally is wise.

THE FAIRIES OF GOD

Last night I slipt from the banks of dream
And swam in the currents of God,
On a tide where His fairies were at play,
Catching salt tears in their little white hands,
For human hearts;
And dancing, dancing, in gala bands,
On the currents of God;
And singing, singing:—
*There is no wind blows here or spray—
Wind upon us!
Only the waters ripple away
Under our feet as we gather tears.
God has made mortals for the years,
Us for alway!
God has made mortals full of fears,*

*Fears for the night and fears for the day.
If they would free them from grief that sears,
If they would keep all that love endears,
If they would lay no more lilies on biers—
Let them say!
For we are swift to enchant and tire
Time's will!
Our feet are wiser than all desire,
Our song is better than faith or fame;
To whom it is given no ill e'er came,
Who has it not grows chill!
Who has it not grows laggard and lame,
Nor knows that the world is a Minstrel's lyre,
Smitten and never still! . . .
Last night on the currents of God.*

A SONG OF THE OLD VENETIANS

The seven fleets of Venice
Set sail across the sea
For Cyprus and for Trebizond
Ayoub and Araby.
Their gonfalons are floating far,
St. Mark's has heard the mass,
And to the noon the salt lagoon
Lies white, like burning glass.

The seven fleets of Venice—
And each its way to go,
Led by a Falier or Tron,
Zorzi or Dandolo.
The Patriarch has blessed them all,
The Doge has waved the word,

And in their wings the murmurings
Of waiting winds are heard.

The seven fleets of Venice—
And what shall be their fate?
One shall return with porphyry
And pearl and fair agate.
One shall return with spice and spoil
And silk of Samarcand.
But nevermore shall *one* win o'er
The sea, to any land.

*Oh, they shall bring the East back,
And they shall bring the West,
The seven fleets our Venice sets
A-sail upon her quest.
But some shall bring despair back
And some shall leave their keels
Deeper than wind or wave frets,
Or sun ever steals.*

NIRVANA DAYS

I

If I were in Japan today,
In little Japan today,
I'd watch the sampan-rowers ride
On Yokohama bay.
I'd watch the little flower-folk
Pass on the Bund, where play
Of "foreign" music fills their ears
With wonder new alway.

Or in a kuruma I'd step
And "Noge-yama!" cry,
And bare brown feet should wheel me fast
Where Noge-yama, high

Above the city and sea's vast
 Uprises, with the sigh
Of pines about its festal fanes
 Built free to sun and sky.

And there till dusk I'd sit and think
 Of Shaka Muni, lord
Of Buddhas; or of Fudo's fire
 And rope and lifted sword.
And, ere I left, a surging shade
 Of clouds, a distant horde,
Should break and Fugi's cone stand clear—
 With sutras overscored.

Sutras of ice and rock and snow,
 Written by hands of heat
And thaw upon it, till 'twould seem
 Meant for the final seat
Of the lord Buddha and his bliss—
 If ever he repeat

This life where millions still are bound
Within Illusion's cheat.

II

Or were I in Japan today—
Perchance at Kyoto—
Down Tera-machi I would search
For charm or curio.
Up narrow stairs in sandals pure
Of soil or dust I'd go
Into a room of magic shapes—
Gods, dragons, dread Nio.

And seated on the silent mats,
With many a treasure near—
Of ivory the gods have dreamt,
And satsuma as dear,
Of bronzes whose mysterious mint
Seems not of now or here—

I'd buy and dream and dream and buy,
Lost far in Mâyâ's sphere.

Then gathering up my gains at last,
Mid "sayonaras" soft
And bows and gentle courtesies
Repeated oft and oft,
My host and I should part—"O please
The skies much weal to waft
His years," I'd think, then cross San-jo
To fair Chion-in aloft.

For set aloft and set apart,
Beyond the city's din,
Under the shade of ancient heights
Lies templed calm Chion-in.
And there the great bell's booming fills
Its gates all day, and thin
Low beating on mokugyo, by
Priests passioning for sin.

And there the sun upon its courts
And carvings, gods and graves,
Rests as no light of earth-lands known,
Like to Nirvana laves
And washes with sweet under-flow
Into the soul's far caves.
And no more shall this life seem real
To one who feels its waves.

"No more!" I'd say, then wander on
To Kiyomizu-shrine,
Which is so old antiquity's
Far self cannot divine
Its birth, but knows that Kwannon, she
Of mercy's might benign,
Has reached her thousand hands alway
From it to Nippon's line.

And She should hear my many prayers,
And have my freest gifts.

And many days beside her should
I watch the crystal rifts
Of Ottawa's clear waters earn
Their way, o'er rocks and drifts,
Beside the trestled temple down—
Like murmurs of sweet shrifts.

Then, when the city wearied me,
To Katsura I'd wend—
A garden hid across green miles
Of rice-lands quaintly penned.
'And, by the stork-bestridden lake,
I'd walk or musing mend
My soul with lotus-memories
And hopes—without an end.

III

Or were I in Japan today,
Hiroshima should call

My heart—Hiroshima built round
Her ancient castle wall.
By the low flowering moat where sun
And silence ever fall
Into a swoon, I'd build again
Old days of Daimyo thrall.

Of charge and bloody countercharge,
When many a samurai
Fierce-panoplied fell at its pale,
Suppressing groan or cry;
Suppressing all but silent hates
That swept from eye to eye,
While lips smiled decorously on,
Or mocked urbane goodbye.

Then to the river I would pass
And drift upon its tide
By many a tea-house hung in bloom
Above its mirrored side.

And geisha fluttering gay before
 Their guests should pause in pied
Kimono, then with laughter bright
 Behind the shoji hide.

Unto an isle of Ugina's
 Low port my craft should swing,
Or scarce an island seems it now
 To my fair fancying,
But a shrined jut of earth up thro
 The sea from which to sing
Unto the evening star of all
 Night's incarnations bring.

Then backward thro the darkened streets
 I'd walk: long lanterns writ
With ghostly characters should dance
 Beside each door, or flit,
Thin paper spirits, to and fro
 And mow the wind, when it

Demanded of them reverence
And passed with twirl or twit.

What music, too, of samisen
And koto I should hear!
Tinkle on weirder tinkle thro
The strangely wistful ear
What shadows on the shoji-door
Of my dim soul should veer
All night in sleep, and haunt the light
Of many a coming year!

IV

Or were I in Japan today,
From Ujina I'd sail
For mountain-isled Migajima
Upon the distance, frail
As the mirage, to Amida,
Of this world's transient tale,

Where he sits clothed in boundless light
And sees it vainly ail.

Up to the great sea-torii,
Its temple-gate, I'd wind,
There furl my sail beneath its beam;
And soon my soul should find
What it shall never, tho it sift
The world elsewhere, and blind
Itself at last with sight of all
Earth's blisses to mankind.

"Migajima! Migajima!"
How would enchantment chant
The syllables within me, till
Desire should cease and pant
Of passion press no more my will—
But let charmed peace supplant
All thought of birth and death and birth—
Yea, karma turn askant.

For on Migajima none may
 Give birth and none may die—
Since birth and death are equal sins
 Unto the wise. So I
Should muse all day where the sea spills
 Its murmur softly by
The still stone lanterns all arow
 Under the deathless sky.

And under cryptomeria-tree
 And camphor-tree and pine,
And tall pagoda, rising roof
 On roof into the shine
Of the pure air—red roof on roof,
 With memories in each line
Of far Confucian China where
 They first were held divine.

And o'er Migajima the moon
 Should rise for me again.

So magical its glow, I dare
Think of it only when
My heart is strong to shun the snare
Of witcheries that men
May lose their souls in evermore,
Nor, after, care nor ken.

v

Yes, were I in Japan today
These things I'd do, and more.
For Ise gleams in royal groves,
And Nara with its lore,
And Nikko hid in mountains—where
The Shogun, great of yore,
Built timeless tombs whose glory glooms
Funereally o'er.

These things I'd do! But last of all,
On Kamakura's lea,

NIRVANA DAYS

I'd seek Daibutsu's face of calm
And still the final sea
Of all the West within me—from
Its fret and fever free
My spirit—into patience, peace,
And passion's mastery.

THE YOUNG TO THE OLD

You who are old—
And have fought the fight—
And have won or lost or left the field—
Weigh us not down
With fears of the world, as we run!
With the wisdom that is too right,
The warning to which we cannot yield,
The shadow that follows the sun,
Follows forever!
And with all that desire must leave undone,
Though as a god it endeavor;
Weigh, weigh us not down!

But gird our hope to believe—
That all that is done

Is done by dream and daring—
Bid us dream on!
That Earth was not born
Or Heaven built of bewaring—
Yield us the dawn!
You dreamt your hour—and dared, but we
Would dream till all you despaired of *be*;
Would dare—till the world,
Won to a new wayfaring,
Be thence forever easier upward drawn!

OFF THE IRISH COAST

Gulls on the wind,
Crying! crying!
'Are you the ghosts
Of Erin's dead?
Of the forlorn
Whose days went sighing
Ever for Beauty
That ever fled?

Ever for Light
That never kindled?
Ever for Song
No lips have sung?
Ever for Joy
That ever dwindled?
Ever for Love that stung?

A VISION OF VENUS AND ADONIS

I know not where it was I saw them sit,
For in my dreams I had outwandered far
That endless wanderer men call the sea—
Whose winds like incantations wrap the world
And help the moon in her high mysteries.
I know not how it was that I was led
Unto their tryst; or what dim infinite
Of perfect and imperishable night
Hung round, a radiance ineffable;
For I was too intoxicate and tranced
With beauty that I knew was very love.
So when divinity from her had stolen
Into his spirit, as, from fields of myrrh
Or forests of red sandal by the sea,
Steal slaking airs, and he began to speak,

I could but gather these few fleeting words:

“Your glance sends fragrance sweeter than the lily,

Your hands are visible bodiments of song.

You are the voice that April light has lost,

Her silence that was music of glad birds.

The wind's heart have you, and its mystery,

When poet Spring comes piping o'er the hills

To make of Tartarus forgotten fear.

Yea all the generations of the world,

Whose whence and whither but the gods shall

know,

Are vassal to your vows forevermore.”

And she, I knew, made answer, for her words

Fell warm as womanhood with wordless things,

But I had drifted on within my dream,

To that pale space which is oblivion.

SOMNAMBULISM

I

Night is above me,
And Night is above the night.
The sea is beside me souging, or is still.
The earth as a somnambulist moves on
In a strange sleep . . .
A sea-bird cries.
And the cry wakes in me
Dim, dead sea-folk, my sires—
Who more than myself are me.
Who sat on their beach long nights ago and saw
The sea in its silence;
And cursed it or implored;
Or with the Cross defied;
Then on the morrow in their boats went down.

II

Night is above me . . .

And Night is above the night.

Rocks are about me, and, beyond, the sand . . .

And the low reluctant tide,

That rushes back to ebb a last farewell

To the flotsam borne so long upon its breast.

Rocks. . . But the tide is out,

And the slime lies naked, like a thing ashamed

That has no hiding-place.

And the sea-bird hushes—

The bird and all far cries within my blood—

And earth as a somnambulist moves on.

SERENATA MAGICA

(*Venetian*)

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
And glides beneath the moon.
Dark palaces beside me pass,
Like visions in a beryl-glass
Of what shall never be, alas,
Or what has been too soon.
Like what shall never be, but in
The breathing of a swoon.

My gondola is a black sea-swan,
And makes her mystic way
From door to phantom water-door,
While carven balconies hang o'er

And casements framed for love say more
Than love can ever say.
Say more than any voice but voice
Of silent magic may.

My gondola is a black sea-swan—
Rialto lies behind.
'And by me the Salute swings,
A loveliness that must take wings
And vanish, as imaginings
Within an Afrit's mind;
As vague and vast imaginings
That can no substance find.

My gondola is a black sea-swan:
San Marco and the shaft
Of the slim Campanile steal
Into my trance and leave a seal
Upon my senses, like the feel
Of long enchantment quaffed:

Of long enchantments such as songs
Of sage Al Raschid waft.

My gondola is a black sea-swan
And gains to the lagoon,
Where samphire and sea-lavender
Around me float or softly stir,
While far-off Venice still lifts her
Fair witchery to the moon,
And all that wonder e'er gave birth
Seems out of beauty hewn.

O-SHICHI AND MOTO

I

O-Shichi, all my heart today
Is dreaming of your fate;
And of your little house that stood
Beside the temple gate;
Of its plum-garden hid away
Behind white paper doors;
And of the young boy-priest who read too late with
you love-lores.

II

O-Shichi dwelt in Yedo—where
A thousand wonders dwell,
Gods, golden palaces and shrines
That like a charm enspell.

O-Shichi dwelt among them there,
More wondrous, she, than all—
A flower some forgetful god had from his hand
let fall.

III

And all her days were as the dream
On flowers in the sun.
And all her ways were as the waves
That by Shin-bashi run.
And in her gaze there was the gleam
Of stars that cannot wait
Too long for love and so fare forth from heaven
to find a mate.

IV

O-Shichi dwelt so, till one night
When all the city slept,
When not a paper lantern swung,

When only fire-flies swept
Soft cipherings of spirit-light
Across the temple's gloom—
Sudden a cry was heard—the cry that should
O-Shichi doom.

v

For following the cry came flame,
A Chaya's roof a-blaze.
And quickly was the street a stream
Of stricken folk, whose gaze
Knew well that when the morning came
Their homes would be but smoke
Vanished upon the winds: now had O-Shichi's
fate awoke.

vi

And waited. For at morning priests
In pity of her years

And desolation led her back
Behind the great god's spheres;
The great god Buddha, who of beasts
And men all mindful was.

O Buddha, in thy very courts O-Shichi learned
love's laws!

VII

Love of the body and the soul,
Not of Nirvana's state! .
Love that beyond itself can see
No beauty wise or great.
O-Shichi for a moon—a whole
Moon happy there beheld
The young boy-priest whose yearning e'er into his
eyes upwelled.

VIII

So all too soon for her was found
Elsewhere a kindly thatch.

And all too soon O-Shichi heard
Behind her close love's latch.
They led her from the temple's ground
Into untrusting days.
And all too soon that happy moon was hid in
sorrow's haze.

IX

For now at dawn she rose to dress
With blooms some honored vase,
Or to embroider or brew tea's
Sweet ceremonial grace.
Or she at dusk, in sick distress,
Before the butsudan,
Must to ancestral tablets pray—not to her Moto-
San!

X

Not unto him, her love, who sways
Her breast, as moon the tide,

Whose breath is incense—Ah, again
To see him softly glide
Before the grave god-idol's gaze
Of inward ecstasy,
To watch the great bell boom for him its mystic
sutra-plea.

XI

But weeks grew into weariness,
And weariness to pain,
And pain to lonely wildness, which
Set fire unto her brain.
And, "I will see my love!" distress
Made fair O-Shichi cry,
"Tho for ten lives away from him I then must live
and die."

XII

Yet—no! She dared not go to him,
To her he could not come.

Then, sudden a thought her being swept
And struck her loud heart dumb.
Till in her rose confusion dim,
Fear fighting with Desire—
Which to O-Shichi took the shape of Fudo, god
of fire.

XIII

And Fudo won her: for that night
Did fond O-Shichi dare
To set aflame her father's house,
Hoping again to share
The temple with her acolyte,
Her lover-priest, who, spent
With speechless passion for her face, in vain strove
to repent.

XIV

But ah! what destiny can do
Is not for folly's hand.

The flames O-Shichi kindled were
From sea to Shiba fanned.
And it was learned a love-sick girl
Had charred a thousand homes.
Then were the fury-smitten folk like to a sea that
foams.

xv

And so they seized her: but not in
The temple—O not there
Had she been led again by priests
In pity—led to share
Her lover's eyes; no, but her sin
Brought not one dear delight
To poor O-Shichi—who was now to look on her
last rite.

xvi

For to the stake they bound her—fire
They lit—to be her fate. . . .

O-Shichi, have I dreamt it all?
Your face, the temple gate,
The fair boy-priest shut from desire
In Buddhahood to-be?
Then let me dream and ever dream, O flower by
Yedo's sea.

AS OF OLD

The fishermen bade their wives farewell,
(The sun floated merry up the morning)
They sang, to the rhythm of the low-swung swell,
 "O come, lads, scorning
 The highlands high,
 There's no warning
 In the blue south sky,
 There's no warning,
 O come, lads, free,
We'll cross the harbor bar and put to sea!"

The fisherwives prayed, the sails blew fast,
(O home it is happy where there's hoping)
They prayed—till the mist dimmed each dim mast:

Then "We're not moping,"
They sweetly sang,
"Winds come groping
And clouds o'erhang,
But we're not moping
Tho left ashore;
They'll come to us at dusk when day is o'er."

But swifter than God the sea-quake came,
(The fishers they were swallowed in its swirling)
O swifter than men could name God's name.

And white waves curling
Hissed in to shore.
The sea-birds whirling
Saw what, dashed hoar?
The sea-birds whirling
Saw dead upborne
The fishers that went forth upon the morn.

A PRAYER

One cricket left, of summer's choir,
One glow-worm, flashing life's last fire.
One frog with leathern croak
 Beneath the oak,—
 And the pool stands leaden
Where November twilights deaden
 Day's unspent desire.

One star in heaven—East or West.
One wind—a gypsy seeking rest.
One prayer within my heart—
 For all who part
 Upon Death's dark portal,
With no hope of an immortal
 Morrow for life's quest.

THE SONG OF A NATURE WORSHIPER

Live! Live! Live!

O send no day unto death,

Undrained of the light, of the song, of the dew,

Distilling within its breath.

Drink deep of the sun, drink deep of the night,

Drink deep of the tempest's brew,

Of summer, of winter, of autumn, of spring—

Whose flight can give what men never give!—

Live!

Live! Live! Live!

And love life's every throb:

The twinkling of shadows enmeshed in the trees,

The passionate sunset's sob;

The hurtling of wind, the heaving of hill,

The moon-dizzy cloud, the seas
That sweep with infinite sweeping all shores,
And thrill with a joy unfugitive!—

Live!

Live! Live! Live!

Unloose from custom and care,
From duty and sorrow and clinging design
Thy soul, through the silent Air.
Go into the fields where Nature's alone
And drink from her mystic wine
Divinity—till thou art even as She,
Great all ills of the world to forgive!

Live!

THE INFINITE'S QUEST

All night the rain
And the wind that beat
Dull wings of pain
On the seas without.
All night a Voice
That broke in my brain
And blew blind thoughts about.

All night they whirled
As a haunted throng
From some dim world
Where there is no rest.
All night the rain,
And the wind that swirled,
And the Infinite's lone quest.

LAD AND LASS

I heard the buds open their lips and whisper,

Whisper,

“Spring is here!”

The robins listened

And sang it loud.

The blue-birds came

In a fluttering crowd.

The cardinal preached

It high and proud,

Spring!

And thro the warm earth their song went trilling,

Trilling,

“Wake! Arise!”

The kingcups quickly

Assembled, strong.
The bluets stept
From the moss in throng.
Like fairies too
Came the cress along.
Spring !

And love in your breast, my lass, awaking—
Waking,
 Love was born !
Your eyes were kindled,
Your lips were warm,
Wild beauties broke
From your face and form.
And all my heart
Was a heaven-storm,
 Was Spring !

THE STRONG MAN TO HIS SIREN

Tonight as I was riding on a wave
Of triumph and of glory,
A Question suddenly, as from the grave,
Rose in me, culpatory.

“ Whence come to you this joyance and this
strength ”

It said, “ this might of vision?
This will that measures all things to its length,
That cuts with calm decision?

“ This blood within your veins, that is as wine
Which Destiny's self blesses,
Whence flows it, from what grape that is divine,
Or trodden from what presses?

“Do you so proud forget what hands have borne
You to the heights and crowned you?
Would you behold what sackcloth has been worn
That laurels may surround you?” . . .

“I would—O lips invisible! whose breath”—
I answered—“so arraigns me;
Whose voice is as a sound sent forth of Death,
And like to Death entrains me.

“I would! For if the flesh of me and soul
Are fibred with the ages,
My triumph is of them and manifold
Of all life's mystic stages.”

So, forth they came—a vast ancestral line,
Upon my vision teeming,
All shapes whose natal semblance could affine
Them to me, faintly gleaming.

I knew them as I knew myself, and felt
The Day of each within me;
And so began to speak, the while they dwelt
About—they who had been me.

“My Sires,” I said, “think you I have forgot
The fervor of your living?
How into me is moulded all you thought,
Of getting or of giving?”

“Think you I do not feel my every drop
Of blood is as an ocean
In which are surging and will never stop
All things your hope gave motion?”

“My senses, that are swift to take delight
And shrine it in their being,
Are they not born of all your faith, and bright
With all your bliss of seeing?”

“ And my full heart within whose fount I hear
Your voices that are vanished,
Can it forget its gratitude or fear
Foes that you braved and banished?

“ No. But the blindly striving years that led
You to the Rose's beauty,
Or taught you out of Ill to disembed
The golden veins of Duty;

“ The wasting and incalculable wants
That in you quailed or quivered;
The longing that lit stars no dark now daunts—
I know, who stand delivered!

“ To you then from whose throng the centuries
Long dead slip now their shrouding,
Who from oblivion's profundities
Rise up, and round are crowding,

“I say, Immortal do I hold your will!
Its gathered might ascending
Is sacred with the unconquerable might
Of God—who sees its ending;

“Of God—on whose strong Vine, Heredity,
Rooted in Voids primeval,
The world climbs ever to some great To-Be
Of passion or reprieval.”

I said—and on night's infinite beheld
Silence alone beside me;
And majesty of greater meanings welled
Into my soul, to guide me.

AT STRATFORD

I could not sleep. The wind poured in my ear
Immortal names—Lear, Hamlet, Hal, Macbeth,
And thro the night I heard the rushing breath
Of ghost and witch and fool go whirling by.
I followed them, under the phantom sphere
Of the pale moon, along the Avon's near
And nimbused flowing, followed to his bier—
Who had evoked them first with mighty eye.
And as I gazed upon the peaceful spire
That points above earth's most immortal dust,
I could have asked God for His starry Lyre
Out of the skies to play my praise upon.
I could have shouted, as, O Wind, thou must,
“Here lies Humanity: kneel, and pass on.”

THE IMAGE PAINTER

Up under the roof, in cold or heat,
Far up, aloof from the city street,
 She sat all day
 And painted gray
Cold idols, scarcely human.
And if she thought of ease and rest,
Of love that spells God's name the best,
Her few friends heard but one request—
 “Pray for a tired little woman.”

She sat from dawn till weary dusk.
Her hands plied on—with but a husk
 Of bread to break
 And for Christ's sake
To bless: was *He* not human?

Then when the light would leave her brush
She'd sit there still, in the dim hush,
And say aloud, lest tears should rush—
 “Pray for a tired little woman.”

They found her so—one morning when
A knock brought no sweet welcome ken
 Of her still face
 And cloistral grace
And brow so bravely human.
They found her by the window bar,
Her eyes fixed where had been some star.
O you that rest, where'er you are,
 Pray for the tired little woman.

WANDA

“ She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs ; ”

I'm Wanda born
Of the mirthful morn
So I heard the red-buds whisper
To the forest beech,
Tho I know that each
Is but a gossipy lisper.

I taunt the brook
With his hair outshook
O'er the weir so cool and mossy,

And mock the crow
As he peers below
With a caw that's vain and saucy.

Where the wahoo reds
And the sumac spreads
Tall plumes o'er the purple privet,
I beg a kiss
Of the wind, tho I wis
Right well he never will give it.

I hide in the nook
And sunbeams look
For me everywhere, like fairies.
Then out I glide
By the gray deer's side—
Ha, ha, but he never tarries!

Then I fright the hare
From his turfy lair
And after him send a volley
Of song that stops
Him under the copse
In wonderment at my folly.

And Autumn cries
“Be sad!” or sighs
Thro her nun lips palely pouting.
But then I leap
To the woods and keep
It wild with gleeing and shouting.

And when the sun
Has almost spun
A path to his far Golconda,
I climb the hill
And listen, still,
While he calls me—“Wanda! Wanda!”

And then I go
To the valley—Oh,
My dreams are sweeter than dreaming!
All night I play
Over lands of Fay,
In delight that seems not seeming.

IN A STORM

(To a Petrel)

All day long in the spindrift swinging,
Bird of the sea! bird of the sea!
How I would that I had thy winging—
How I envy thee!

How I would that I had thy spirit,
So to careen, joyous to cry,
Over the storm and never fear it!
Into the night that hovers near it!
Calm on a reeling sky!

All day long, and the night, unresting!
Ah! I believe thy every breath
Means that Life's Best comes ever breasting
Peril and pain and death!

ANTAGONISTS

I

Life flung to Art this voice, of mercy bare,
"Fool, to my human earth come you, so free,
To wreathe with phantom immortality
Whoever climbs with passionate lone care
That shifting, feverous and shadow stair
To Beauty—which is vainer than the sea
On furious thirst, or than a mote to Me
Who fill yon infinite great Everywhere?
Let them alone—my children! they are born
To mart and soil and saving commerce o'er
Wind, wave and many-fruited continents.
And you can feed them but of crumbs and scorn,
And futile glory when they are no more.
Within my hand alone is recompense!"

II

But Art made fierce reply, "Anathema,
On you who fill flesh but the spirit scorn.
Who give it to the unrequiting law
Of your brute soullessness and heart unborn
To aught than barter in your low bazaar—
Though Beauty die for it from star to star.
You are the god of Judas and those who
Betrayed Him unto nail and thorn and sword!
Of that relentless worm-bit Florence horde
Who drove lone Dante from them till he grew
So great in death they begged his bones to strew
Their pride and wealth and useless praise upon.
Anathema! I cry; and will, till none
Of all earth's children still shall worship you."

SEEDS

A thousand years
In a mummy's hand
A seed may lie,
Then, planted, spring
Into life again
Under sun and sky.

A thousand days
In a soul's dark ways
A word may wait.
But a touch at length
May arouse its strength
And the word proves—Fate.

WORLD-SORROW

(The Cry of the Modern)

World-sorrow have I known, like unto God.
Nothing there is of pain but echoes down
My breast with wan reverberance and pang,
And peaceless passes thro it evermore.
The struck bird's cry wounds my all-feeling blood
To pity that will not be solacèd,
Sounds on me like far pleas of the unborn
Against predestined days. A withering bud
Brews barrenness thro all the verdancy
Of Spring. And in a tear—tho anguish shape it
On the warm lid of joy—earth's Tragedy,
Whose curtain falls not for it has no end,
Comes mirrored to me as infinite Ill.

How shall I 'scape it! How, O how escape
The trooping of prayers lost upon the void,
Of hopes misborn and fading not to rest!
How shall I burn not with all vain-lit loves
That alway billow thro me their slow fire
Fed by the agony of new-broke hearts!
How loose me from too long commisery
For those whom unrequiting Time has given
To the altar of the aching world's unrest!
A grief immitigable to the Hand
Whose mystery of returning sun can heal
Winter away, seems here; a grief but calm
Of immortality can make forgiven!

For even as all the gleaming girth of stars
That wreathe the Illimitable beautifully
Quench not the vast of night, so do all joys
Life strews along her passing to the grave
Prevail not o'er the shadow of sure death.
And O Humanity, long-suffering Harp

Of passion-strings unnumbered, shall His skill
Flung thus forever o'er thy fragile rest
Build but these harmonies that seem sometimes
Unworth the misery of the trampled worm?
Would, would I were not vibrant with all strains
He strikes from thee, or else more perfect tuned!
World-sorrow have I known, like unto God.

THE SOUL'S RETURN

Let me lie here—
I care not for the distant hills today,
And the blue sphere
Of far infinity that draws away
All to its deep,
Would only sweep
Soothing the farther from me with its sway.

Let me lie here—
Gazing with vacant sadness on this weed.
The cricket near
Will utter all my heart can bear to heed.
Another voice
Would swell the noise
And surge, that ever sound in human need.

Let me lie here:

For now, so long my wasted soul has tossed

On the wide Mere

Of Mystery Hope's wing alone has crossed,

I ask no more

Than to restore

To simple things the wonder they have lost.

BIRTHRIGHT

(To A. H. R.)

My own, among the unnumbered years
God casts from that full Garner which
Is His Eternity one shall
Be ours, beyond all fate or fears.

For, ranging lone amid its thorns,
Seeking the buds that grew between,
We met and made its morning seem
New in a world grown old to morns.

And so tho He may scatter still
Many a fadeless other round,
In none, for us shall there be found
That first awakening and thrill.

But as in peace we tread Love's Land,
To which it gave us right of birth,
We shall remember that New Earth
Came when we first walked hand in hand.

ROMANCE

(To A. H. R. on North Cliff, Lynton, Devon)

White-caps hurry to meet the shore
An hundred fathoms down.
Gray sails are shimmering on the wind
Far out from Lynmouth town.

High crags above us are whispering keen,
The heather and the ling
Laugh to the sky as driven by
The wild gulls cry or cling.

And, where the far sun like a god
Scatters the mist, lies Shore.
Is it Romance's magic realm
Spring reigns forever o'er?

Romance that our morning hearts could see
Across the darkest foam?
Then do we know it well, my love,
Because it is our Home.

ON THE ATLANTIC

(*To A. H. R.*)

Who stood upon that schooner's driven deck
Last night as reefed and shuddering she hove
Into the twilight and all desperate drove
From wave to angrier wave that sought her wreck?
Who labored at her helm and watched the wind
Stagger the sea with all his stunning might,
Until in dimness dwindling from our sight
She vanished in the wrack that rode behind?
We know not, you and I, but our two souls
That followed as storm-petrels o'er the waves
Felt all the might of Him who sinks or saves,
And all the pity of earth's unreached goals.
Felt all—then swift returning to our love
Dwelt in its peace, uplifted safe above.

BY A SILENT STREAM

To sit by a silent stream,
Watching water-lilies dream:
While breezes winnow
The floating seeds,
And the aery minnow
Weaves his wavy web among the reeds.

Where a fallen sycamore
Whitely arches a pathway o'er,
And shadows darkle
The lambent cool,
As, softly a-sparkle,
Sunbeams arrow lightnings thro the pool.

Where the everlasting's breath

Odors mysteries of death.

Where iron-weeds, rusted

Leaf and pod,

By insects dusted,

Rustle—then in autumn sadness nod.

To sit . . . till every sense

Lose thought of whither and whence;

Till earth and heaven

And faith and fate

No longer leaven

Life, with hope or fear, or love or hate.

THE GREAT BUDDHA OF KAMAKURA
TO THE SPHINX

Grave brother of the burning sands,
Whose eyes enshrine forever
The desert's soul, are you not worn
Of gazing outward to dim strands
Of stars that weary never?

Infinity no answer has
For Time's untold distresses.
Its deepest maze of mystery
Is but Illusion built up as
The blind build skies—with guesses.

Nor has Eternity a place
On any starry summit.

The winds of Death are wide as Life,
And leave no world untouched—but race,
And soon with Night benumb it.

And Karma is the law of soul
And star—yea, of all Being.
And from it but one way there is,
Retreat into that trancèd Whole—
Which is not Sight nor Seeing;

Which is not Mind nor Mindlessness,
Nor Deed nor driven Doer,
Nor Want nor Wasting of Desire;
But only that which won can bless;
And of all else is pure.

Turn then your eyes from the far track
Of worlds, and gazing inward,
O brother, fare where Life has come,
Yea, into its far Whence fare back.
All other ways are sinward.

NECROMANCE

Can heedless gazing teach me more than toil?
Can swaying of sere sedge along the slope,
Or the dull lisp of oaken limbs that foil
The sun's ensheathing fervor, interfuse
My vacant being with far meanings whose
Soft airs blow from the hidden seas of Hope?
Or can the wintry sumac sably stooping
So charm and lift my heart from heartless drooping
When other healings all were asked in vain?
Yes—there are witcheries in the things of earth
That breathe with an illimitable voice
Wisdom and calm to us, and lure to birth
Dim intimations bidding us rejoice
Even in the great mystery of Pain.

LOOK NOT TO THE WEST

Look not to the west where the sun is dying

On fields of darkening clouds !

Look not to the west where the wild birds nest

And the winds are hicing

To sweep away sleep from the forest,

And tatter the shrouds of sable silence

Lit by the fire-fly's morris-dance.

Look not to the west—

'Tis best for the heart to hear not the chants

Of Evening over day's death !

Look not to the west where the sun is dying—

The sun that rose with song !

Look not to the west where the closed quest

Of thy soul seems lying ;

Where every sorrow that ever
Was wed with wrong in human breast,
From the sea of its radiance never fades!
Look not to the west—
'Tis best for the heart to see not the shades
That rise—the wrecks of the Past!

A NIKKO SHRINE

Under the sway, in old Japan,
Of silent cryptic trees,
There is a shrine the worldliest
Would near with bended knees.

Green, thro a torii, the way
Leads to it, worn, across
A rivulet whose voice intones
With mystery of moss.

A mystery that is everywhere :
The god beneath his shrine
Seems but a mossy shape—yet so
Ensheathed is more divine.

For tho Nature has muffled him
And sealed him there away,
The meaning of all faith remains—
That men will ever pray.

Aye will, as long as soul has need,
As long as earth is sod
With tombs, bow down the knee to all
That wakens in them God.

THE QUESTION

I shall lie so one day,
With lips of Silence set;
Eyes that no tear can wet
Again: a thing of Clay.

I shall lie so, and Earth
Will seize again her dust—
Though she must gnaw and rust
The coffin's iron girth.

I shall lie so—and they
Who still the Day bestride,
Will stand so by my side
And with sad yearning say:

“ What is he now, this man,
Shut in a pallor there,
His spirit that could dare,
What—what now is its span?

“ A withered atom’s space
Within a withered brain?
Or can it from the Wain
To far Orion race?”

And, like all that have died,
I shall but answer—naught.
Yet Time this truth has taught:
The Question—will abide.

I'LL LOOK NO MORE

I'll look no more! thro timeless hours my eyes
Without intent have watched the slowing flight
Of ebon crows across quiescent skies
Till all are gone; the last, a lonely bird,
Scudding to rest thro streams of golden curd
That flow far eastward to the coming night.
And as I turn again to foiling thought
My spirit leaves me—as faint zephyrs leave
The trees at evening; tho all day they've sought
A place to hide them in and fondly grieve.
And silently the slow oil sinks beneath
The noiseless burning wick of yellow flame.
It is as if God back to him would breathe
All the world's given life, and end its Aim.

NIGHT'S OCCULTISM

Northward the twilight thro dark drifts
Of cloud-wreck lingers cold.
Southward the sated lightning sinks
Beneath the wooded wold.

Eastward immovable deep shade
Is sealed with mystery.
Westward a memory of dead gold
Wakes on a sunset sea.

Under, is earth's still orbiting;
Over, a clearing star:
In all, the spirit litany
Of life's strange avatar.

UNCROWNED

I am not other than men are, you say?
But faulty and failing? And your love can lend
No glory of illusion to o'erlay
The lack, and make me seem one in whom blend
Nobilities wherein your heart may lose
All that it feels of flaw in me, or rues?

Can it so be? Did ever woman love
Whose faith wreathed not about the brow she chose
Aureolas illumining him above
All that another thinks he is, or knows?
I ask it bravely, for the way is long,
And, haloless, should I not lead you wrong?

WRITTEN IN HELL

*(By Sir Giles, whom the Witch of Urm leads
to Judas Iscariot)*

'Against a castle moated gloomily by a bitter drain
of blood,
From whose fetid wave contumely
Of all truth was reeking fumy
And infectiously, I stood;
Waiting for her sign—
A shriek repeated nine.

I shrank at every aspish quivering fear set crawl-
ing in my breast.
But betimes I felt a shivering
Shriek cut ear and brain with slivering

Stings of terror, sin, unrest—
Christ! it raised the dead
Out of the moat's black bed.

Nine times—and then across the thickening reek
a rusty draw was dropped;
Thro portcullis sped a quickening
Shadow past to where with sickening
Feet, befired by awe I stopped—
There she laughed a laugh
No 'devil's soul could quaff.

I swear its clamor tore the stuttering leaves from
shrub and shrunken tree;
Swear no limbo e'er heard muttering
Like that spawn of echoes sputtering
Midnight with their drunken glee—
Yet, ere half were done,
I could not hear a one.

She put her finger burning eerily to my lips—I
heard them lock.

Led me then a marsh-way, cheerily—
Tho the quick ooze spurted drearily
Thro root-rotten curd and rock.
Things like water-ghouls
Slid slimily in pools.

She stepped just once upon a hideous burrow, dank
and haired with grass;
Fixed upon me eyes perfidious
As a fiend's are, yet insidious—
Questioned if I dared to pass.

“I will search all Hell
To find him,” from me fell.

And so was drawn thro dark cadaverous with the
sound of gabbling dead.
Where we heard them hoot palaverous
Drivel learned beneath unsavorous

Moulds, and saw a glutton's head
Grin to a hissing bat,
That scraped him as he spat.

Witch she was, I knew, turned shepherdess to a
soul blind as a sheep's.

But I dogged her on o'er jeopardous
Steeps down which she sped with leopardess
Limbs into miasmic deeps.

"Swim," she gasped behind—
Then like a she-wolf whined.

It almost seemed to me as deadening as the sluice
of dreary Styx.

Fire and foulness mixed with leadening
Slush I drank; but swam the reddening
Stuff a league with weary licks.

Up a sulphurous bank
We climbed, and there I sank.

Again she laughed that laugh—a shrivelling, ghast-
ly, gaunt, uncanny spate.

Up I sprang and cursed my snivelling
Soul for weariness—for drivelling,
And for so forgetting Hate.

“ You will find him there ”,
She pointed—thro her hair.

I write these words from Hell where bloodily
locked with him in fight I woke.

Where we fall down caverns ruddily
Spilt with glazing gore and muddily
Dashed with stagnant night and smoke.

Yet I do not care,
For he groans by me—there.

AT THE HELM

(Nova Scotian)

Fog, and a wind that blows the sea
Blindly into my eyes.
And I know not if my soul shall be
When the day dies.

But if it be not and I lose
All that men live to gain—
I who have little known but hues
Of wind and rain—

Still I shall envy no man's lot,
For I have held this great,
Never in whines to have forgot
That Fate is Fate.

DEAD LOVE

If this should never end—
This wandering in oblivious mood
Along a rutless road that leads
From wood to deeper wood—
This crunching with unheedful foot
Acorns, I think, and withered leaves . . .
Perhaps a rotten root—

If this should never end—
This seeing with insentient eyes
Something that seems like earth, and, too,
Like overbending skies;
This feeling, well—that time is space,
Space, time; and each a pallid glass
In which Life sees her face—

If it should never end—
The road, the wandering and the feel
Of dead infinities that seem
O'er our dead sense to steal,
And like seas cease above—
Would it much matter, love?

MORTAL SIN

(Song for a drama)

Much the wind
Knows of my heart,
Though he whispers in my ear
That he has seen me burn and start
When I dream of your breast, my dear.

Much the wind
Knows of my soul!
For no soul has he to lose
On a mistress who can dole
Kisses that drug as poison-dews.

SEA-MAD

(*A Breton Maid*)

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me!

One said:

“Away! he is dead!

Upon my foam I have flung his head!

Go back to your cote, you shall never wed!—

(Nor he!)”

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me.

Two brake.

The third with a quake

Cried loud, “O maid, I’ll find for thy sake

His dead lost body: prepare his wake!”

(And back it plunged to the sea!)

Three waves of the sea came up on the wind to me.

One bore—

And swept on the shore—

His pale, pale face I shall kiss no more!

Ah, woe to women death passes o'er!

(Woe's me!)

THE DEATH-SPRITE

(A ballad for God)

A.D. 909

Three kings with naught of a care
To a hunting went;
Three kings of stirrup fair
And of yew-bow bent.

Away they rode with a song
On the summer tide;
Away from thrud and throng
By the blue lake side.

And "Ho!" they vaunted aloud
To the morning hills.
And "Ha!"—What reck the proud
For the God of Ills?

Naught! so they swagged thro the glade
Where the roe-buck rose:
She nosed the wind, affrayed
By the blod "Ho, hos!"

"Three arrows now to her heart!"
They shouted, and sped,
Each king, an evil dart
With a flinten head.

And O she staggered down—
O unpitied, slain!
But in her dreadful swoun
There was more than pain!

For Horror sprang from her blood,
A Spectre of Death!
It drew them thro the wood—
Where a Chapel saith

Masses for souls that are lost

In the wilds of sin—

There mumbled, “Ye’ll pay cost

Ere to shrift ye win!”

Then led them to a bay tree

By an open grave,

Where three ghost-kings in three

Stony coffins clave.

Which spake, “Lo, we too were fair!”—

“Unto this ye’ll come!”—

“Ay ye, who of naught beware!”—

So spake—and were dumb.

Then of fright and dread the kings flung

Away yew-tree bow

(The Chapel bell slow rung

With the bleak wind’s blow).

And fast they fled thro the glade
To the castle hall.

*But God had not been stayed—
They were lepers, all!*

Woe then to kings! to the pelf
That men call pride!
Christ shrive us all from self,
From the Death-sprite hide!

WORMWOOD

(In Old England)

What is he whispering to her there
Under the hedge-row spray?
“Spring, Spring, Spring?”—Is the world so fair
To him, fool, that he has no care
As he cuckoos it all day?

Is he quite sure—quite sure the sap
Of life's not hate, but love?
If I should tell him there's no gap
Between her and a . . . nameless hap,
Would he still want his “dove”?

Or would he go as blind to buds
As I am, who watch here,

While he is pouring poet floods
From his thin lips, and while his blood's
 Burning for her so near?

It would be swords—swords! . . . And his steel
 Should rip death from my breast.
But would he ever know the feel
Of Spring again, of its ribald reel,
 As once *I* did, the best?

No! He would curse henceforward leaf
 And flower and light—as I.
Spring?—It is fire, lust, ashes, grief—
All that a Hell can hold, in fief! . . .
 He'll learn it ere he die.

QUEST AND REQUITAL

I

(Before He Comes)

Sweet under swooning blue and mellow mist
September waves of forest overflow
The hills with crimson, amaranth and gold.
Winds warm with the memory of scented hours
Dead Summer gathers in her leafy lap,
Rustle the distance with dim murmurings
That sink upon the air as soft as shades
Dropt from the overleaning clouds to earth;
While golden-rod and sedge and aster hushed
In sunny silence and the oblivion
Of life drawn from the insentient veins of Time,
Await the searing swoon of Autumn's reign.
It is a day when death must seem as birth,
And birth as death; and life—till love comes—pain.

II

(He Has Come)

These are the leafy hills and listless vales
Of iridescent Autumn—this the oak
Against whose lichened bole I leant and looked
Away the sunny hours of afternoon.
Here are the bitter-sweet and elder sprays
I fingered, dreaming to the muted flow
Of breezes overhead—and here the word
I wrote unwittingly upon the soil.
How long ago it was I cannot tell:
The loneliness of unrequited love
Lies like a blank eternity between
Those hours and these I hear slip thro my heart.
I only know all days I've ever seen
Must seem now of some other life apart!

III

(He Loves)

“Will you let any moment dip its wing
Into your heart and find no love of me
To tint with deathless Dream”—he said—“and
Spring,
Its flight to the dim bourne of memory?
Will you have any grief that can forget
How grief should find forgetfulness in love?
And since your soul in my soul’s zone is set
Will it sometimes ask other spheres to rove
Where touch and voice of me shall not be met?
Ah no! in all the underdeeps of Death
Or overheights of Life it still shall be
At tryst with mine thro moan or ecstasy.
In all!” . . . Yet ere a year he’ll draw no breath
But is another’s!—Will God let it be?

IV

(Betrayed by Him)

All day I've bent my heart beneath the yoke
Of goading toil, remembering to forget,
To still upon my lips his kiss that woke
Me in elysian love one word has broke—
One stinging word of severance and regret.
All day I've blotted from my eyes his face,
But now at evening tide it comes again,
And memories into my darkened soul
Rush as the stars into high heaven's space.
As the bright stars! But, ah, tomorrow! when
Once more I must forget and see life's goal,
That was so green, with siring laurel hung.
Tomorrow and tomorrow! till is wrung
Peace from the piteous hours I strive among!

v

(Finding No Peace)

I say unto all hearts that cannot rest
For want of love, for beating loud and lonely,
Pray the great Mercy-God to give you only
Love that is passionless within the breast.
Pray that it may not be a haunting fire,
A vision that shall steal insatiably
All beauteous content, all sweet desire,
From faith and dream, star, flower, and song, and
 sea.

But seek that soul and soul may meet together
Knowing they have forever been but one—
Meet and be surest when ill's chartless weather
Drives blinding gales of doubt across their sun.
Pray—pray! lost love uptorn shall seem as nether
Hell-hate and rage beyond oblivion.

VI

(In After Years to Him)

You say that love then led us—you and me?
I say 'twas hate, that wore love's wanting eyes:
Hate that I could not tear away the lies
That wrapped you with their silken sorcery.
Hate that for you I could not open skies
Where beauty lives of her own loveliness;
That God would give me no omnipotence
To purge and mould anew your soul's numb sense.
Aye, hate that I could love you not tho love
Pent in me ached with passion-born distress—
While thro unfathomable dark the Prize
Seemed sinking, as my soul, from heaven above.
Love, say you? love? and hate rent us apart?
I tell you hate alone so tears the heart.

VII

(To Him After His Death)

God who can bind the stars eternally
With but a breath of spirit speech, a thought;
Who can within earth's arms lay the mad sea
Unseverably, and count it as sheer naught;
With his All-might could bind not you and me.
For tho He pressed us heart to burning heart
And set then to the passion that enthralls
His sanction, still our souls stood e'er apart,
As aliens beating fierce against the walls
Of dark unsympathy that would upstart.
Stood aliens, aye! and would tho we should meet,
Beyond the oblivion of unnumbered births,
Upon some world where Time cannot repeat
The feeblest syllable that once was earth's.

LOVE IN EXTREMIS

I care not what they say who hold
We should speak but of life and joy;
I have met death in one I love,
Death lusting to destroy.

And I have fought him vein by vein,
Loosened his cold and creeping clutch,
Driven him from her—twice and thrice—
With might too much.

Yet with too little! for I know
That she at last will lie there still.
Then all my fire of love shall fail
To thaw that chill;

For it will freeze light from her eyes,
Pulse from her breast and from her soul
Me, whom no opiate of peace
Can e'er console.

None: . . . till I follow her, in time,
And find her, though all Dust deny!
With that to be I'll front the day,
And fronting die.

OVER THE DREGS

If I had died last year when Death
And I were at finger-tips, till Life
Slipping between blew her warm breath
Into my heart again and veins,
And opened my eyes and nulled my pains—

If I had died where would you be?
You so passionate, yet quick
To escape from passion's mastery,
When clasping and kiss and touch are gone,
And days and space are between us drawn?

Where would you be? My arms you chose—
Arms too ready to seize and sin—
And kept no burning forbiddance in those

Still eyes of yours, or else, I think . . .

No! I unsay it! No! . . . So drink.

Drink! the last glass! And then . . . "My
thought?"

It is that when we've reached the last
Of pleasure we are like two who've fought,
Who have no common love but love
Of fighting—so does our passion prove!

For it is only passion—such!
Tho clasping and kiss and touch were love,
A little—and sometimes, maybe, much,
When soul and heaven looked far away,
And flesh seemed only flesh—and clay.

But, it is ended! So, drink! . . . How
You've ruined me, as I have you!
All that you might have been! and—now!
All that I was, until . . . 'Tis clear
I should have died in Spring last year.

BEWITCHED

(On a Devon Moor)

Why do I babble of bitter chills—
And icy trees—and snowy fallows?
Why do I shudder as twilight spills
A ghostly gray and the bent moon sallows
The moor with her wicked flame?
Why do the gibbering croons of the hag
In her hut by the wood
Go muttering, muttering in my blood—
Till the hoot of an owl
On the snag of a tomb
Breaks out of the gloom
Like the wail of a witch's name?

Ugh, it is drawing my feet away—
The road's gone! the moonlet's sunken!

What shall I do if it comes to fray
With fiends invisible, wild and drunken—
Fiends on a churchless fell!
Ha, is it cracking of ice in the bog
That is clutching my throat,
Or devils gnawing the widow's shoat?
By the Cross of the Christ,
There's a fog that is black
As—U-r-r!—at my back!—
They are dragging me . . . down to . . . hell!

QUARREL

And is it so
That two who stand
Heart closed in heart,
Hand knit to hand,
Can let love go
Asunder, so?
Speak hard—not understand?

That one asks much?
One gives too small?
And so is lost,
It may be—All?
That for a touch
Of pride we such
A heaven can let fall?

No!—But to Fate
Say with me, “Go:
Death may bring dross
But this I know;
Love can abate
Life’s harshest hate,
So loving I bend low.”

OF THE FLESH

(At Monte Carlo)

We met upon the street;
Quick passion sprung into the eye of each;
No dilettante heat!
For though I do not love her now, beseech
You, signor, do you think
We could face so in any spot, nor fear
To leap the fatal brink
Into each other's arms—that, once a-near,
Hell's self could make us shrink?

No, no! Such love as ours
Stabbed peace heart-deep and burnt the flesh to
mad.

It scorned the simple powers
Of sympathy and mild repose, and had

One thirst alone—to hold
Each other mouth to still unsated mouth
Until, perchance, the cold
And damp of death should end some night its
drouth.

But only day would come,
Unlock our arms and show us duty's eye
Calm, pale, and sternly dumb.
And so we'd swear never to kiss or sigh
Again—for well we knew
God grants such boons only to man and wife.
But night distilled the dew
Of loneliness—and so, once more, that life.

And how was the spell burst?
Each long embrace seemed sweeter than the last;
Each dulling heart-beat nurst
The shame, until I tore me from the past,

And cried, "I hate my soul,
And thine and this false love!" She fainted—fell.
I kissed her lips . . . stole
The ring that choked her finger . . . said farewell.

And since then Time has pressed
Ten restless years. But if I saw her lay
Her hand upon her breast,
As once she used, and send her soul to say
A word with those dark eyes . . .
Ha, what is that, signor? "Respect? . . . My
wife?"
That's as may be. You rise?
Adieu, signor. Fate deals the cards in life.

A DEATH SONG

(For a Drama)

Toll no bell and say no prayer,
Let no rose die on my bier.
All I hoped for shall appear
Or be well forgotten, there.
(Like the waves of yesteryear.)

Toll no bell and drop no sigh,
Bear me softly to the tomb;
Life was dark, but light is nigh—
Light no sorrow shall consume
(And no kiss of love—or cry).

Toll no bell; the clod will toll
Grief enough for any ear.
When the last has sounded clear,
Know that I have reached the Goal
(Which is God seen thro no tear).

ON BALLYTEIGUE BAY

I've heard the sea-dead three nights come keening
And crying to my door.

Why will they affright me with their threatening
Forevermore!

O have they no grave in the salt sea-places
To lay them in?

Do they know, do they know—with their cold dead
faces!—

Know . . . my sin?

There's blood on my soul. The Lord cannot wipe it
Away with His own blood.

I've beaten my breast with blows that stripe it,
And burned His Rood

With kisses that shrivel my lips—that shrivel
To sin on the air.
But the night and the storm cry on me evil.
Does He not care?

There's blood on my soul: but then . . . she should
never
Have said it was *his*—the child—
And *hers*—for she knew I'd never forgive her . . .
I grew so wild
There was just one thing to be done—to kill her:
Just one—no more.
I took the keen steel . . . one stroke would still
her . . .
I counted four.

And she fell—fell down on the kelp—none near her.
But when she lay so fair
I kissed her . . . because I knew I should fear her,
And smoothed her hair;

And shut her two eyes that fixed me fearless
Of death and pain.
And the blood on my hand I wiped off tearless—
And that on my brain.

And I buried her quickly. The thorn-trees cover
Her grave with spines. I pray
That each in its fall will prick her and shove her
To colder clay.
But . . . yonder! . . . she's up! and moans in the
heather
A whimpering thing!
I'll bury her deeper in Autumn weather . . .
Or Winter . . . or Spring.

And then if she comes with them still to call me
Each night, I'll tell her loud
He was mine! and laugh when they try to pall me
With sea and shroud.

And I'll swear not to care for Christ or Devil.

They'll skitter back

To the waves, at that, and be gone with their
revel. . . .

God spare me the rack!

NIGHT-RIDERS¹

See them mount in the dead of night—

Men, three hundred strong!

Armed and silent, masked from the light,

Speeding swartly along.

What is their errand? manly fight?

Clench with a manly foe?

I would rather be dead of wrong

Than ride among them so.

See them enter the sleeping town.

Hear the warning shot!

Keep to your beds, free men—down, down!

Dare you to move?—dare not!

¹ This clan of tobacco outlaws in Kentucky during 1907-1908 cast such disgrace on her good name as years will not suffice to erase.

These are your masters—these who crown
Black Anarchy their king—
I would rather my hand should rot
Than have it do this thing.

See them steal to the house they seek—
Brave men, O, brave all!
There lies a sick boy, fever-weak;
Who comes forth at call?
A woman? “Go in, you bitch!” they reek.
“Give us the old man out!”
Rather my bitten tongue should fall
To palsy than so shout.

And—they have him, “the old man,” now,
Bound—with nine beside.
One, a Judge of the Law’s grave brow,
Sworn by it to bide.
“Lash him!”—a hundred lashes plow
A free-born back with pain!

God, shall we let such cowards ride
And burn and beat and stain?

O the shame, and the bitter shame,
That thus, across our land,
Crime can arise and write her name
Broad, with a bloody hand!
O the shame, and the bitter shame
Upon our chivalry.
I would rather have led the band
That dined on Calvary.

So, Night-errants, ride on and ride—
Avenging, wrongly, wrong.
But when the children at your side
Grow lawless up and strong;
When at their drunken hands you've died
As beasts beside your door,
You will repent, God knows it—long,
These nights to Hell made o'er.

HONOR

(To the Night-Riders Who Murdered Hedges)

Honor to men
Who leave their homes
And children safe asleep,
To take the cover of night and fright
Women that wake and weep!
Honor, again,
To those who mount
For blood—hounds in a pack!
But let us honor the most of all—
Men that shoot in the back!

For, it is good
To fare a-field
And frighten helpless things,

And how good with a torch to scorch

A poor man's harvestings.

But, if you would

Do something high

And blameless, brave not black,

Ride till you find a peaceful man—

Then shoot—shoot in the back!

Why, there was one

In Palestine

Who gave a certain kiss.

More, fine friends, do you give who live

In a land not far from this!

For what *he* had done

He hanged himself—

Shame made a sick heart crack.

But you will muster and ride again—

And shoot—shoot in the back!

Oh, and you may!

But wait, the Day

Will come—shall it not come?
The Sovereign Law that you flaunt and
daunt,
Will she lie always dumb?
Her prisons gray
They are slow, but wide;
When they open, you will lack
Many a thing—but most the fair,
Brave chance to shoot in the back!

O that a man
Should write such words
Of any soul alive!
That any shameless ear should hear—
And still in stealth connive
To burn and to ban,
From home and help,
The weak who fear the rack!
That he could wait till Justice *turns*,
Then shoot—shoot in the back!

BRUDE¹

(A Dramatic Fantasy)

Dealing with:

Boadicea, queen of the Britons.

Lamora, a Gaulish captive.

Brude, a Druid.

Cormo, a warrior.

Corlun, Druid high-priest,

and

Horma, a wandering hag.

SCENE: *A Hall of hewn wood, on the island of Mona, in which BOADICEA sits enthroned and attended. On her right, warriors, long-haired,*

¹ This sketch, written in 1898, was in no sense conceived for the stage.

*mustached and painted with woad. On the left,
a band of Druids robed in white: among them
BRUDE, whom she watches jealously from time
to time. On the floor in front of her cringes
LAMORA, held by CORMO.*

Boadicea. Britons, hear!
Ye know how my lord,
Caerleon's liege,
Swore feal to the Romans
His lorn wife and daughters—
When the wolf, Death,
Gnawed life from his heart.
Ye know how the Roman,
Ravenous traitor,
Slaves us with thongs
Of brutal behest.
Will ye still daunt
Your necks to the noose?
All. No! no! Queen! no, no, no!
Boadicea. Then, warriors of iron,

Sworded with terror,
Fly to your henges!
Fight till ye crowd
Hell with the ghosts
Of ethlings that Britons hate.

Warriors. To the slaughter! Hro! to the
slaughter!

[They rush from the hall in haste.]

Boadicea (continuing). And ye, Druid seers,
Heard by the gods,
Feared by the fiends,
Ye must away!
To your dark fane,
The gaunt oak-forest
Holy with mistle!
White-robed as spirits,
Gold knives uplifting,
Sing to the serpents,
Seek the Charmed Egg!

Druids (bowing with weird signs). Great is the
Queen.

Her Druids hear.

But shall no gift be made?

Boadicea. Yea . . . since Lactantius,
God more than all gods,
Will not be soothed
By sheep or cattle,
On your high altar
Slay ye this maiden of Gaul!

[*Points to LAMORA, who cries out to her,*
then to BRUDE:

Lamora. Nay, Queen, O pity!
O, Brude, win pity!
Let her not yield me
Prey to the gods.
Rather in battle
'Gainst the hard Roman
Would I be trampled
Into the grave.

Trampled by war-hoofs . . .

Into a grave of blood!

Boadicea. Proud-lip! mocker!

Dare you sputter

Shame on the awful gods?

[*Strikes her down . . . BRUDE watches
helpless.*

Corlun (coming forward). Kneel, Druids, kneel!

Then bear her away!

Meet me at midnight,

Druids' day,

Deep within Mona's wood.

[*They kneel, then go, bearing LAMORA.*

SCENE II: *Sunset. A rocky cave near the forest.*

BRUDE *pacing back and forth with restless muttering.*

Brude. O thou Lactantius,

Whom other gods

Worship with trembling,
While their star-chariots
Roll to the sea!
Symbolled by circles,
Endless in being,
Dost thou love life-blood
As Druids say?
When the white maiden's
Pierced on the altar
Dost thou drink praises
From her wide wound?
So teach the seers,
So did I, Brude, swear—
Till I saw Lamora!
Her eyes are love-fires,
Her words are sorcery
Stronger than god-laws!
But . . . who comes hither?

[Has heard a moan.]

Hither harasser
Of these my thoughts?

Ha! is it Lamora
Followed by Cormo?
Curses like vampires
Fall on his head!

[*Steps aside.*]

Lamora (entering in despair). Mother! sweet
mother,
Far in the Eastland,
Soon must thy daughter
Pass from earth's day!
Ne'er shall a boy-babe
Suck from her bosom
Valor to strangle
Wolves in the lair!
Never shall husband
From the red war-fields
Bring her the foeman's spoils!

Cormo (behind her). Lamora, proud one—

Lamora. Leave me, viper!
Stand from me farther!

Will you e'en now
With tongue spit poison
On my last ebbing hour?

Cormo. Nay, maiden, cruel,
But I will aid thee.
Words are as smoke,
Deeds as flame!
Hear! I will save thee
From Druid talons
And bear thee whither thou wilt:
Give but thy vow to wed me!

Lamora. Wed thee?—thee? . . .
Never—while cliffs
O'er the plain jutting
Plight void death to the leaper!
Never while waves
Curl gray lips
Yearning to gulf the doomed!

Cormo. Then thou shalt die! shalt die!
Druids shall gash

Streamings of life
Out of thy shrinking sides!

Lamora. Then die I will! . . .

But not thro fear,
Coward of Britons,
Will I e'er mother
Child of thy loins.
Rather let flames,
Tongues of the gods,
Suck the red life from my breast.
Yea, let the gods,
Glutless as men,
And, as women,
Treacherous, vain—
Strike, at the call of thy Queen!

[Goes, followed by CORMO.]

Brude (coming forward). No! thou shalt live,
live, live!

*[Goes into cave, then comes forth with a
knife.]*

SCENE III: *Midnight. A stormy glade in the forest. On one side a cromlech whereon LAMORA lies bound: CORLUN beside her with an uplifted blade of gold. On the other side Druids—around a pot of serpents over a fire in the cavern of an uprooted tree.*

[BRUDE is among them, watchful.

Corlun (chanting). Orpo!—Ai!—

Now shall the Roman

Backward be driven,

O gods!

Orpo!—Ai!—

For to the death stroke

Lamora's given,

O gods!

Orpo! Ai!—

Her skyward soul

Thro the dank dark shall rise,

As the morn's sun

Unto your halls
Far o'er the skies.
And she shall say
Thus Druids crave
Help of the helpers of men.

Druids (incanting around the cavern). Orpo!—

Ai!—

Serpents are spawned
Of devils' spit,
O gods!
Orpo!—Ai!—
Spit boiled with blood
In caverns lit
By fungous fangs
From Mona's wood.

[They circle. BRUDE steals behind CORLUN.]

Orpo!—Ai!—
Serpents are spawned
In magic broth,
To coil and wriggle,

Writhe and twist;
Till their froth
Becomes a mist,
Till the mist
An egg shall form—
Charm that Druids prize.

Brude (with a sudden cry). Corlun, the gods
Wait for thy soul!

[*Slays him.*

Lamora, fly!
With me, fly—
Thro the black forest!

[*Has cut her bonds.*

Great Lactantius,
Maker of gods,
Loves *not* the maiden's death-cry!

[*They escape.*

Druids (in terror). Corlun is slain!
Corlun! slain!
Woe to the Druids!

Woe from the heavens !

Woe from the ireful Queen !

[They pursue confusedly.]

SCENE IV: *Dawn; far in the forest. Enter BRUDE and LAMORA faintingly to a spot where HORMA, the hag, unscen by them is gathering herbs.*

Lamora. Strength no more

Wings me for flight.

With hunger of sleep I faint.

[Falls.]

Brude (sinking by her). Yet ere thy sleep,

Maid like the dawn,

List to my heart's wild uttering !

All I have dared

Was for thy love—

Tho but to love thee

Would I dare all !

Lamora. Ah ! What is love,

Brude wise and noble ?

Is it this burning
Far in my breast
Melting my soul to thine?
Is it this power
Hid in my eyes
Shaping thy face
On hill and cloud?
Is it this whisper,
As of sea-waves,
Singing thy name to me?
Yea! So now we may sleep.

[*They lie down. HORMA, the hag, who has
heard them, creeps maundering up and
gazes at them.*

Horma. Owl and eaglet?
Have they fled?
Then let witch-toads sing!
Oaths forgotten,
Would they wed?
Then let bull-bats,

Wild a-wing,
Flap the moon from heaven!
Deep in the forest—
Ha! ho! ho!

[Breaks off, hearing shouts. Continues.

They'll be slain!

[Fleeing.

They'll be slain!

Brude (waking). What was my dream? . . .

[Hears the shouts.

Lamora! Lamora!

[They start up and look at each other.

Silence.

Lamora (at length). So was it doomed.

Now we must cross
Thro the death-fog
Unto the blest.

But side by side,
And ere they come.

[Hands him her knife.

Here we shall die.
But in the Meadows
Where the thin shades
Wander and wander,
Ever in love we'll live!
Fold first thy arms around me.

[They embrace.

Brude (starting from her). Hear! they have
come—

Cormo! The Queen! . . .

Lamora. Then strike! for thy face
Alone would I see in death!

Brude (killing her then himself). Cormo! . . .

Queen! . . . Death!

Ye shall never . . . tear us apart!

*[Falls with her in his arms, as BOADICEA
and warriors enter.*

Boadicea (*seeing them*). Dead! . . . Leave
them, food

For beast and bird!

Leave them! away! away!

[All go with pride and spurning.

THE END



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